DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 294 169 CS 009 160

AUTHOR Erazmus, Thomas R.
TITLE The Effect of a Recreational Reading Program on Standardized Test Scores.
PUB DATE Jul 87
NOTE 21p.; Requirement for master's degree, Olivet Nazarene University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Undetermined (040) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Grade 5; Independent Reading; Intermediate Grades; Reading Ability; *Reading Improvement; *Reading Programs; Reading Research; *Recreational Reading

ABSTRACT

Using the Pizza Hut "Book It" Program which encouraged students to read a certain number of books per month, a study examined the effect of this program on standardized test scores. Subjects, 98 fifth grade students, were placed in high, middle, or low reading groups according to teacher assessment. Half of the students from each group participated in the reading program. Each student chosen had an I.Q. in the average range, and students with I.Q.'s above or below average were not selected. Improvement in reading ability for each student was measured by the difference between the composite reading scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests at the end of the fourth and fifth grades. Results indicated no statistical difference between the experimental and control groups in improvement of reading ability for the high and middle reading groups. In the low reading group, significant differences in reading ability between the control and experimental groups were found, indicating that students who participated in the recreational reading program had more improvement in reading ability than those who did not participate. (Three tables of data are included, and two pages of footnotes and 19 references are appended.) (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED294169

THE EFFECT OF A RECREATIONAL READING PROGRAM ON STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

by
Thomas R. Erazmus
B.S. in Education
Northern Illinois University
December, 1973

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Thomas R. Erazmus

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

A research study
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education
Olivet Nazarene University
July, 1987

CS009160

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of the Problem	1
2.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	3
	Necessity	3
	Benefits	4
	Studies	6
3.	METHOD	8
4.	RESULTS	10
5.	IMPLICATIONS	12
FOOTNOTES		15
BIBLIOGRAPHY		17

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Learning to read should be the most important goal in a student's school career. Lesley Morrow says that early exposure to literature can help a student to grow in many ways. The use of a recreational reading program promotes the development of the English language by allowing students to practice skills learned in direct reading instruction. Students who read more improve work habits, develop language skills and grow socially and emotionally.[1]

Because of our nation's changing economy, independent reading programs are becoming more and more necessary. Many newspapers, articles, and books have documented the exportation of jobs out of our country. Our society is changing to one which has a service and information economy and these changes mean we have to approach the teaching of reading differently. Teachers and other educated people know the importance of reading if people are to participate effectively in our changing economy.[2] With these benefits in mind, it is appropriate for teachers to make voluntary reading an important goal in their classroom.

There are other reasons for the need of a recreational reading program in our schools. A 1984 study by the Book Industry Study Group reports that voluntary reading among those under twenty-one years of age has declined twelve per cent in the last eleven years.[3] A 1980

study of fifth grade students found that given leisure time options, a majority chose other activities over reading. On the average, a little more than five per cent of their leisure time was spent reading. Twenty-two per cent said they never read at all.[4]

In 1979, a National Assessment of Educational Programs study of reading showed that students who watched more than four hours of television had, on the average, the lowest reading test scores.[5] Leisure time reading is most popular with students up to the age of nine and the least popular with thirteen year olds.

In 1985, the National Academy of Education published a report titled, "Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading." The statistics cited here are even more startling. Almost fifty per cent of the students surveyed said they spent less than four minutes per day in recreational reading.[6]

In light of these findings, it is remarkable that there is very little attention given to recreational reading by the educational establishment. The use of the basal text in a structured reading program is not enough to promote reading. Thomas Estes has stated that teachers need to teach the proper reading skills and also to improve attitudes and habits in trying to get students to read more.[7]

This study will examine the effect of an independent reading program on fifth grade students through the use of standardized test scores. The study will determine if students who participated in the program showed greater improvement in reading ability than students who did not participate. For the purpose of this study, recreational reading is defined as, when given various options, students will choose to read .

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Necessity

There are many articles in the educational journals that claim independent reading is important. While there is very little hard evidence to support these claims, their logic does make sense. It is reasonable to suggest that practice in applying skills makes for a better reader. To make reading instruction profitable, teachers must help students to learn to read and then encourage them to use these skills.[8] It does not make sense to teach people to read and then not give students an opportunity to use these skills.[9]

Unfortunately, many children do not want to read. Many of the ways we teach reading and literature only build negative feelings toward reading. Many school districts ability group students in reading. Given time restrictions, many of the needs of the students cannot be met during the regular reading class. Vocabulary, inferencing, context clues are all important skills that can be enhanced by recreational reading. As mentioned previously, the amount of reading done by people under twenty-one is going down; newspapers have reported on the epidemic of illiteracy. A new problem may be developing in the United States, the problem of alliteracy, those who can read but choose not to.[10] A reader is not merely someone who can read, but someone who chooses to read.[11]

A potential cause of this problem is that teachers are not making

the distinction between building reading skills and developing positive reading habits and interests. The many ways of teaching reading have not always included ways to get students to read. Even though there are many reasons young people appear disinterested in reading, the source of the problem can be related to the fact that many reading programs are skill oriented. Many schools regard reading activities as more work. Too much time is spent on skillpack and studybook assignments.[12]

If schools are to develop independent readers who will read for information and enjoyment, children must be taught independence in book selection, having a purpose for reading, and use of the skills acquired during formal instruction. Reading as a skill needs practice; the only way to develop the reading art is to read.

Benefits

The goal of the recreational reading program should be the practice and development of skills learned in the classroom. A recreational reading program would enrich the educational process in the classroom. The non-competitive part of recreational reading is important in helping students understand that everybody can read.[13]

Depending on what they read, people can have a greater understanding of the world around them. While this is beneficial for all students, it is especially important for children who are poor. Students who have never been out of their own neighborhood, or rural students who have never been to the city, can begin to understand the world around them. In the beginning it might be difficult, but as students read about new things, they will make sense of the new information and remember it. Every time the student reads about topics they have already come in

contact with, this will aid in comprehension and even more information will be remembered. Reading can extend and enrich by facilitating an understanding of the world around us. Reading can also help students attain more information with very little inconvenience. Students can select the types of books to read, when and where to read them, as well as control the amount they want to read. Reading allows students to grow at their own rate.[14]

With recreational reading programs students develop better comprehension. The use of context clues, the ability to determine the meaning of a passage, is enhanced by recreational reading. Recreational reading provides students with the chance to develop use of context clues without teacher supervision. Because students can choose their own books, they will likely learn to use context clues on their own to gain understanding.

Another benefit of a recreational reading program is that students learn the meaning of new words. Many words are learned in a basal reading program, but this cannot account for all of the vocabulary development of a student.[15] Researchers have stated that after the third grade, the amount of vocabulary words learned is greatly determined by the amount of books read.[16] Experts say that students are introduced to over three thousand new words in a school year. Word-by-word instruction is impossible. The most profitable way to produce worthwhile vocabulary gains is to get students involved in a program of recreational reading in the classroom.[17]

While improving vocabulary skills, recreational reading also improves the ability to pronounce words correctly. As the reader meets words again and again, their pronunciation becomes easily recognizable.

Occasional contact with these words is not good enough to learn this skill. Every teacher has heard students try to figure out pronunciation of words in context. Teachers have also heard students begin to pronounce words incorrectly, stop, and then say it correctly. Arriving at the correct pronunciation would not have happened if the word was not already in the student's vocabulary. As students come in continual contact with words, they recognize them immediately. Getting students to read will improve students' verbal fluency.[18]

Studies

There is some research that programs that are well run will improve interest in reading and develop positive attitudes. Of the few studies that have been published, it is shown that students do improve their reading skills when they are involved in a recreational reading program. Reading achievement can be directly related to the amount of books read by students.[19]

In a study conducted by Daniel Phau to determine the relationship between the amount of recreational reading and reading achievement, the results indicated a significant difference between the control and experimental groups after two years. The classes involved in the recreational reading program checked out more books from the library, and when these students were asked to fill out a survey, they indicated they read more than the control group.[20] When these groups were compared, using a formal reading test, there were significant differences in sight vocabulary, context clue usage and comprehension.

The ability to write expressively and smoothly was also tested. When the students were asked to respond to a story that was read to them,

the experimental group showed greater proficiency in this area. Thus, it would appear that the following skills--vocabulary, comprehension, and the use of context clues--all benefit from the promotion of a voluntary reading program.

In a study undertaken by D. V. Connor in Australia, two hundred and fourteen students were divided according to reading habits. Connor divided the students into groups having good, medium and poor habits. Connor found that when intelligence is held constant for all test subjects, there were significant differences between habits and achievement. Connor concludes that there is a positive and large relationship between reading habits and reading achievement.[21]

In a study by Odette Bruneau, thirty-three students from Texas participated in a project to see if independent reading had a positive effect on vocabulary, comprehension and test scores. A survey was given to measure the amount of recreational reading that was done by this group. The Gates MacGinite Reading Test, Level D, was given as a pretest and as a posttest. The test measured vocabulary and comprehension abilities. For this group there was a strong correlation between interest in reading and test scores. The students who responded in the survey that they read the most had the higher test scores.[22]

The Report of the Commission on Reading states that

> Priority should be given to independent reading. Two hours per week should be expected by the time children are in the third or fourth grade. To do this children need access to books and guidance in choosing appropriate works that represent the core of our cultural heritage.[23]

Chapter 3

METHOD

As previously stated, there is very little research to support the claim that recreational reading has a positive effect in reading growth. The Pizza Hut, "Book It" Program, in which students were encouraged to read a certain number of books per month, was used as the basis of this project. Students were asked to complete short summaries to verify their reading. The experiment to be described was carried out to see if the amount of recreational reading had a positive effect on standardized test scores.

Fifth grade students were given the option of participating in a voluntary reading program. The students, according to teacher assessment, were placed in high, middle, or low groups. Thirty-four students chosen were from the high group, seventeen of which participated in the program and seventeen did not. Thirty-six students chosen were from the middle group, eighteen of which participated and eighteen did not. Twenty-eight students were chosen from the low group, fourteen of which participated and fourteen did not. Each student chosen had an I.Q. in the average range according to the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test. Students with I.Q.'s above or below the average range were not selected.

Students who read the minimum amount of books in all months were selected to be in the group that participated. Many read more than the required amount. Students who read less than one book or no books were selected for the group that did not participate.

Improvement in reading ability for each student was measured by the difference between the composite reading scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests at the end of the fourth and fifth grades.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

For the high and middle reading groups the findings indicated no statistical difference between the experimental and control groups in improvement of reading ability. In both the high and middle groups, however, there was a statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups in pretest and posttest scores. This indicates that in both reading groups those who chose to participate in the recreational reading programs are better readers than those who chose not to (see Tables 1 and 2).

Significant differences in reading ability between the control and experimental groups were found in the low group. Those students who participated in the recreational reading program had significantly more improvement in reading ability than those who did not participate (see Table 3).

Table 1

Pre and Posttest Scores of High Group Students

	Pretest Means	Posttest Means	t	df	p
Students who participated	8.788	9.271	.820	32	.05
Students who did not participate	7.135	7.924	.986	32	.05
Difference in pretest means	1.653		2.613	32	.05
Difference in posttest means		1.347	1.758	32	.05

Table 2

Pre and Posttest Scores of Middle Group Students

	Pretest Means	Posttest Means	t	df	p
Students who participated	5.8	6.411	1.309	34	$>.05$
Students who did not participate	4.867	5.550	1.375	34	$>.05$
Difference in pretest means	.933		1.752	34	$<.05$
Difference in posttest means		.861	2.009	34	$<.05$

Table 3

Pre and Posttest Scores of Low Group Students

	Pretest Means	Posttest Means	t	df	p
Students who participated	3.321	4.564	5.363	26	$<.05$
Students who did not participate	3.464	4.107	1.653	26	$<.05$

Unlike the high and middle groups, the low reading group had no statistical difference in the pretest scores between the control and experimental groups ($p < .05$). Students who chose to participate were no better readers than those who chose not to.

Chapter 5

IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was not to show that students would not progress in a regular classroom. It was to see if the amount of recreational reading a student did would cause students to progress even more. Even the students who did not participate showed growth in reading ability. Statistically, there was no significance in the amount of growth between the high groups who did and did not participate and the middle groups who did and did not participate.

Even though there was very little difference in growth in the high and middle groups, teachers know that students who read more are more advanced in language skills. The amount of reading a student does can also be an indicator of gains in comprehension and vocabulary. In the individual scores from the Metropolitan Tests, the groups that read more had higher scores in vocabulary, literal and inferential comprehension and critical analysis.[24]

If only one group showed improvement, most teachers would hope that low group students were the ones. These students are the ones who like reading the least, but given the opportunity, these students showed the most growth at the end of fourth grade. The mean grade equivalent of these students who did participate was 3.321. At the completion of fifth grade, the mean grade equivalent was 4.564, a growth of almost 1.2 years. The mean grade equivalent at the end of fourth grade for those students who did not participate was 3.464. At the end of fifth

grade their mean grade equivalent was 4.107. The students who did read were showing more growth, closing the gap in terms of reaching their grade level. The students who are not reading are falling farther behind in terms of their grade level.

Teachers must give students the opportunity to read in school. There are so many distractions outside of school that teachers cannot depend on students reading outside the classroom. Teachers must take responsibility for getting students interested in reading, and teachers must do everything to keep students interested. Classrooms that are well-stocked in good reading materials and school libraries that are easily accessible are essential. Classrooms should have newspapers, catalogs, magazines and manuals available. Mini-centers can be set up with books about sports, hobbies, fiction and history. This can be done with minimal teacher effort. Teachers and parents can show children the importance of reading by being models themselves and by reading to their children at an early age. Children need to have books at home and the possibility of regular trips to the library. Teachers not only have the responsibility to teach skills, but to improve attitudes and habits in the area of independent reading.

Teacher practice is very important. Teachers must show that reading is important by letting students see and hear their teachers read. Also, teachers should look at their own way of teaching reading. Of course, skill development is important, but educators need to keep in mind the long term benefits of showing students the pleasures of reading. Such benefits as expanding one's horizons, providing intellectual growth and acquiring more information will provide long term rewards for students.

This study has raised questions that warrant further investigation. In this report, only one year of student activity was recorded. Might the results have been different if the students were kept track of for two or three years? Would other studies, at different grade levels, produce similar or dissimilar results? Why did the low groups show the most improvement? What are the effects of gender and socio-economic status on test scores?

FOOTNOTES

[1]Lesley Morrow, "Voluntary Reading: Forgotten Goal," Educational Forum, 50 (1986), 160.

[2]Ibid., p. 164.

[3]Book Industry Study Group, The 1983 Consumer Research Study on Reading and Book Purchasing (New York: Book Industry Study Group, 1986.

[4]Vince Greaney, "Factors Relating to Amount and Type of Leisure Reading," Reading Research Quarterly, 15 (1980), 348.

[5]Donald Searls, Nancy Mead, Barbara Ward, "Relationship of Students' Reading Skills to T. V. Watching, Leisure Time Reading and Homework," Journal of Reading, 29 (1985), 160.

[6]U. S. Department of Education, Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1984), p. 77.

[7]Thomas Estes, "A Scale to Measure Attitude Toward Reading," Journal of Reading, 156 (1971), 135.

[8]Joanne Yatvin, "Recreational Reading for the Whole School," Reading Teacher, 21 (1977), 187.

[9]Morrow, p. 162.

[10]Ibid., p. 159.

[11]Mark Godosky, "Ten Years of Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading," Reading Improvement, 17 (1980), 155.

[12]U. S. Department of Education, What Works, Research About Teaching and Learning (Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, 1986), p. 11.

[13]D. L. Spiegel, Reading for Pleasure: Guidelines (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1981), p. 81.

[14]Ibid., p. 12.

[15]U. S. Department of Education, Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, p. 707.

[16]Ibid., p. 77.

[17]William Nagy, Patricia Humen, Richard Anderson, "Learning Words from Context," Reading Research Quarterly, 20 (1975), 236.

[18]Spiegel, p. 13.

[19]U. S. Department of Education, What Works, Research About Teaching and Learning, p. 11.

[20]Daniel Phau, "Effects of Planned Recreational Reading Programs," Reading Teacher, 21 (1967), 37.

[21]D. V. Connor, "The Relationship Between Reading Achievement and Voluntary Reading of Children," Educational Review, 6 (1954), 224.

[22]Odette Bruneau, "Comparing Reading Interest and Comprehension of Fifth Grade Students," Reading Improvement, 23 (1986), 101.

[23]U. S. Department of Education, Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, p. 82.

[24]U. S. Department of Education, Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading, p. 76.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barmore, Judith and Philip Morse. "Developing Lifelong Readers in the Middle Schools." English Journal, Vol. 66, April '77, pp. 57-61

Becoming a Nation of Readers, The Report of the Commission on Reading. National Institute of Education, 1984.

Bennett, William. "Research About Teaching and Learning." U. S. Department of Education, 1986.

Book Industry Study Group. 1983 Consumer Research Study on Reading and Book Purchases. New York: Book Industry Study Group, 1981.

Bruneau, Odette. "Comparing Reading Interest and Comprehension of Fifth Grade Students." Reading Improvement, Summer '86, Vol. 23, pp. 100-102.

Connor, D. V. "The Relationship Between Reading Achievement and Voluntary Reading of Children." Educational Review, Vol. 6, 1954, pp. 221-227.

Estes, Thomas. "Scale to Measure Attitudes Toward Reading." Journal of Reading, Vol. 15, Nov. '71, pp. 135-138.

Geaney, Vincent. "Factors Relating to Amount and Type of Leisure Reading." Reading Research Quarterly, Vol. 15 (Spring '80), 337-357.

Moore, Jesse. "What We Know After Ten Years of SSR." Reading Teacher, Vol. 33, Jan. '80, pp. 445-449.

Morrow, Lesley. "Field Based Research: A Process for Teachers Learning and Change." Reading Teacher, Vol. 51, Dec. '85, pp. 330-333.

_____. "Voluntary Reading, Forgotten Goal." Educational Forum, Vol. 50, Winter '86, 159-166.

Nagy, William, Humen, Patricia, Anderson, Richard. "Learning Words From Context." Reading Research Quarterly, Vol. 20, Winter '75, 233-257.

New Frontiers in Reading. Allan Figurel, ed. Scholastic, May 1960.

Oliver, Martin. "Effects of High Intensity Practice on Reading Achievement." Reading Achievement, Vol. 13, Spring '86, pp. 226-229.

Phau, Donald. "Effects of Planned Recreational Reading Programs." Reading Teacher, Vol. 21, Oct. '67, pp. 43-50.

Searls, Donald, Nancy Mead, Barbara Ward. "Relationship of Students' Reading Skills to T. V. Watching, Leisure Time Reading and Homework." Journal of Reading, Nov. '85, Vol. 29, 158-162.

Spiegel, D. L. "Reading for Pleasure--Guidelines." International Reading Association, 1981.

Sodoski, Mark. "Ten Years of Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading." Reading Improvement, Vol. 17, Summer '80, pp. 153-158.

Yatvin, Joanne. "Recreational Reading for the Whole School." Reading Teacher, Vol. 21, Nov. '77, pp. 185-189.